

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

# Sunday Living

**ajc** On [accessatlanta.com/blogs](http://accessatlanta.com/blogs): Dating misadventures

## A softer approach to scoliosis

### Flexible bands replace rigid old back brace

More than 1 million American children are diagnosed with scoliosis, a curvature of the spine. But innovative flexible braces are now allowing kids to participate in activities — from cheerleading to soccer — at a level unheard of with traditional braces. Alpharetta chiropractor Brian Ouellette, president of Scoliosis Specialists, talks with the AJC about advances in the field.

**Q:** When should you check your children for scoliosis?

**A:** Typically, we check children between 10 and 15 — but we still miss many, many

kids. I'm also seeing more calls where parents are concerned about their 3-year-olds, 6- or 7-year-olds. Basically, whenever your child goes through a growth spurt, you should take a good look at your kid's spine and just make sure everything is OK.

**Q:** So how do you make sure your child does not have scoliosis?

**A:** The simplest and best way is simply to have them bend forward and look at their spine and see if you see any discrepancy from one side to the other.

**Q:** So what advances have been made in the field of treating scoliosis?

**A:** The biggest is the soft brace ... which

► Please see **BRACE, M2**



**Brian Ouellette** is among the first American doctors to try the 3-D soft brace on patients such as **Maureen Longoria**, 7, of Marietta.

## Brace: A softer solution

► Continued from M1

is a three-dimensional solution to a three-dimensional problem. Traditionally, the hard brace is the way we have dealt with the problem, but the rigid brace can't deal with the torsion and rotation. It also can lead to muscle atrophy. On the other hand, the new soft brace can deal with the problems, doesn't cause atrophy, and it can be worn under clothes, so kids aren't embarrassed. This has been used as a solution for years in Europe but is fairly new to the United States [Ouellette is one of the first to use it]. That is expected to change rapidly, however, especially since a study on soft braces has been accepted for the American Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics.

**Q:** What are the problems if you don't get scoliosis corrected?

**A:** In adults, it can affect the heart and lungs and lead to wedging of the vertebrae, which can lead to bone spurs and spinal problems.

— Diane Lore